The Sting of HIV Stigma: The Role of Core Self-Evaluations and CD4 Cell Count among Workers Living with HIV

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The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a major global public health issue accounting for approximately 1.2 million deaths per year (Roser & Ritchie, 2020). It has been estimated that 37.9 million individuals are currently living with HIV globally (WHO, 2018). Understanding how people living with HIV (PLHIV) manage their work demands and medical condition is a pressing concern among industrial/organizational psychologists (Jones & King, 2014). In this research, we draw upon stigma theory (Crocker, Major & Steele, 1998; Goffman, 1963) and appraisal theory of emotions (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003) to posit and test the relationship among HIV stigma, emotions (i.e., fear and shame) and work behaviors (i.e., in-role performance and citizenship behaviors). We also test how core self-evaluations (CSE), a psychological factor, and CD4 cell count, a biological/clinical indicator, moderate these relationships. Survey data were collected over three measurement periods at three month intervals among workers who were regular patients from two HIV treatment clinics in the Philippines. CD4 cell count data were abstracted from the participants’ medical records. Results revealed that HIV stigma was indirectly related to both in-role performance and organizational citizenship behaviors via shame but not via fear. Low core self-evaluations heightened the impact of HIV stigma on shame while low CD4 cell count aggravated the effects of shame on work behaviors. Finally, we found support for moderated mediated relationships linking HIV stigma, shame and work behaviors under low (as opposed to high) core self-evaluations and low (as opposed to high) CD4 cell count. We will conclude by discussing future directions for broadening organizational scholarship by including vulnerable, marginalized and understudied special populations.

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He is currently Associate Editor of the Journal of Vocational Behavior and serves on the editorial board of the Journal of Applied Psychology, Journal of Management, Journal of Management Studies, and Journal of Business and Psychology. He has a track record in receiving nationally and internationally competitive external research funding from the Australian Research Council (Discovery & Linkage schemes), Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and National Natural Science Foundation of China.

In his spare time, Simon enjoys cooking, travelling with family, watching US TV shows, and playing video games with his nephews, nieces, and friends.